

1968

The Black Student at Denison

Denison University

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Recommended Citation

Denison University, "The Black Student at Denison" (1968). *Writing Our Story*. 27.
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THE BLACK STUDENT AT DENISON

THE PURPOSE

Beginning in January, 1968, the Black students at Denison University, long aware of the need for a greater diversification of the student body, met in a series of meetings and discussed the nature of their roles on the campus. It was concluded that the Black student has an important function within all phases of student life, and that he has something of value to offer. However, the students felt that more of an effort should be made to bring more qualified Black students as well as those of other ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds to the Denison campus. The general student consensus was found to be for further diversification. An intensive meeting was held with the Director of Admissions, the Black students, and other interested students representing bodies of the Denison Campus Government Association and the Denison Christian Association. As a result of this meeting a body of student recruiters was formed to aid the General Admissions Office in the recruitment of more qualified Black students from major areas of the country.

ADMISSIONS AND ACADEMICS

Denison University is a fairly small college of liberal arts and sciences. Students are of an above-average level and freshmen are selected on a competitive basis. Factors weighed in the selections are academic achievement in high school, Scholastic Aptitude Tests and Achievement Scores, character recommendations, and leadership as expressed through all varieties of activity inside and outside of school. Students accepted usually fall in the 550 to 700 board score range, have a grade average of approximately 3.0, and are in the top two fifths of the high school class in rank.

The Admissions Committee realizes that the cultural background of many Black students will influence to a great degree the performance on many of the standardized tests including the college boards. Therefore, it is

generally concluded that board scores and achievement scores will be viewed with this in mind; for example, if scores were comparably low but class rank and grades were high, one might be accepted.

Denison offers a plan of study which gives the students a general background of knowledge in preparation for "intelligent living," further study in a graduate school, and specialized education in preparation for a vocation. The academic load is from fifteen to seventeen hours per semester. The departments present a fairly rough and comprehensive curriculum in the fields offered.

Included in the general curriculum is a new course in Black Culture encompassing most aspects of Black life; history, literature, the arts, et cetera. The course is in the experimental stage. Within the next year it will probably be resolved into separate courses in each discipline. They will be directed by the respective departments.

It has been the experience of the Black students presently attending Denison that the first year is an unusually rough one. The student's academic load should not exceed what the student is capable of doing, and he should not take particularly difficult subjects. In response to the need for additional preparatory aid for freshmen, a tutorial program has been organized and funded. This service will be available to those entering students who voluntarily request help in weak areas before taking college introductory courses. The tutorial program will begin operation in the near future.

COLLEGE COSTS

The proposed average yearly expenses for a Denison student including room, board, tuition, books and other costs, in the period 1969 - 1970 is approximately \$3650. The college has various financial aid programs to help any student in need of financial assistance to meet expenses. Thus there are scholarships, grants-in-aid, loans, and student employment opportunities

available. There is a special fund, ten per cent of the college scholarship funds for freshmen, set aside especially for Black students in need of financial assistance. The amount of aid provided for a student is determined by need and is based on the findings of the Parents' Confidential Statement that must be submitted to the school. Applications for financial aid are considered carefully and individually to assure the student adequate aid to meet the need.

SOCIAL ATMOSPHERE

A primary concern of most students when considering a college is the general social atmosphere. At present, Denison's social life revolves largely around the Greek system. There are a total of nine sororities and ten fraternities on campus, and to become involved deeply in the social program, it is considered important (for men in particular) to pledge. Black students should be aware that some of these organizations are under discriminatory pressures from their national organizations. However, within the last year, Denison's chapters have been attempting to change their national policies concerning discrimination. All are willing to pledge Black students and many have pledged Black students when the desire has been mutual. Both the Panhellenic Council and the Interfraternity Council have issued general statements concerning non-discrimination.

Unaffiliated men and women are organized largely to provide representation in the student government. They do not possess much of the political, financial, or group backing to form their own social life. However, because of the increased enrollment there are more students than the Greeks can pledge, and many are unaffiliated or "independent." There are greater efforts being made to provide social activities at an all-campus level of participation. It is felt that more diversity in the student body will contribute greatly in this change, not only in this one aspect, but the entire college experience as well.

IN CONCLUSION

The student body of Denison University is working to effect change on the campus in many areas of the college experience. For example the recent Conference on Calendar and Curriculum gave impetus to some needed changes in course offerings and to an "experimental college." A referendum offered by the Time for Change Committee, and voted on by the entire student body, specified its desires for certain changes in university policy, some of those changes have been made.

As a group, the students helping in recruiting will continue their efforts to aid in further change of the college atmosphere, making it receptive to all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. A challenge awaits the Black student to further effect change within the society and at the same time receive a college education. Denison is very much in need of you.

October, 1968

Prepared by students
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